GUIDE TO THE NO6 COMANCHE FILE

[The Comanche are a Shoshonean-speaking Amerind people now living jointly with the Kiowa and the Kiowa-Apache tribes in a Federal trust area in the state of Oklahoma. They probably originally lived in the northwestern Great Plains of the United States during the 16th and 17th centuries, but moved out into the western and southwestern Great Plains and into eastern New Mexico, western Texas and northern Mexico during the 18th and 19th centuries. They were a nomadic people, living principally on hunting the bison after the acquisition of the horse in the 18th century, but the diet included other game, berries, edible roots, and other foods. In a treaty signed in 1867, the Comanche, along with the Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache, were assigned a tract of land as a reservation in what is now Oklahoma and where they now live. As a result of this move, they had to give up their nomadic existence and during the ensuing years, a large part of their traditional culture has disappeared.

The social science bibliography on the Comanche consists of about 300 items, almost all of which were surveyed for this file (see 36: Murdock & O'Leary for an ethnographic bibliography of the Comanche). The quality of the descriptive information in this file is not particularly good, for the traditional culture of the group had broken down almost completely before trained descriptive observers took to the field. The emphasis in the file is on the traditional Comanche culture of the 19th century, with not a great deal of information being available on reservation life and the post-1900 period.

The Comanche file consists of 36 sources, all of which are in English. The basic sources are 1: Hoebel and 3: Wallace & Hoebel. 1: Hoebel is a descriptive study of Comanche law, using the case-study method, which is supplemented by 29: Hoebel. 3: Wallace & Hoebel is a reconstruction of Comanche culture as it was before it was radically changed by White contact. 20: Wallace, a sketch of Comanche life on the reservation, supplements this source. 7: Richardson, 22: Dacus, and 33: Mooney are summary sketches of Comanche culture. 35: United States is a précis of the present status of the tribe in Oklahoma.

Ethnographic descriptions and discussions are contained in a number of sources. 5: Carlson & Jones discusses Comanche ethnobotany, while 31: Jones contains a biography of a modern medicine woman and much information on medical botany. Descriptions of the 1873 and 1878 Ghost Dances are found in 6: Linton and 8: Hoebel. Social organization is briefly discussed in 9: Gladwin (on kin behavior) and 19: Lowie (on dances and societies). Material culture is touched on in 18: Jackson (describing a putative Comanche burial) and 34: Ewers, which analyzes a collection of artifacts gathered during the period 1828-1851. 27: St. Claire & Lowie gives English versions of a number of folktales. Human biological material is presented in two sources. 4: Goldstein gives some anthropometric data, while 26: Cummins & Goldstein discusses Comanche dermatoglyphics.

Ethnographic data are also given in a number of primary accounts by travelers, government officials, captives, and other observers during the period 1785-1910. 2: Lee and 10: Horn are accounts by captives of the Comanches, Horn during 1836-1837 and Lee during 1855-1858. A number of Spanish colonial officials wrote brief descriptions of the Comanche during the period 1785-1819. These are presented in 13: Simmons, 23: Cabello y Robles, and 28: Thomas. David Burnet wrote a series of letters describing Comanche life in 1818 and 1819 (21: Burnet).

Albert Gilles describes incidents of Comanche reservation life in Oklahoma during the first decade of the 20th century (32: Gilles).

Language and linguistics are presented in a number of sources. Phonology and phonemics are discussed in 14: Riggs, 16: Smalley, and 25: Canonge. Grammar is discussed in 15: Osborn & Smalley. Linguistic acculturation and baby language are discussed in 11: Casagrande and 17: Casagrande respectively. 12: Canonge presents a number of texts with English translation.

The Comanche file as a whole is not a particularly good one for purposes of comparative or area research, since the ethnographic material is decidedly skimpy in the bibliography as a whole. The emphasis of the file is on the pre-reservation period where possible. Ethnographic materials (apart from linguistic information) from the reservation period are sparse. The file has adequate information on law, history, the ethnosciences, and socio-political organization, but the data on social and psychological behavior, child-rearing, and reproduction are weak. The file does contain some information on most aspects of Comanche culture.]

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